



Joy On Purpose

This lesson will help youth to understand their purpose and how this can lead to lives of joy.

ENHANCER OF JOY

Vocation

DURATION

60 minutes

LESSON DEVELOPED BY

Pamela King and Steven Argue

TIPS TO PREPARE

Background: Read the article by Pamela King and Steven Argue for a broader idea of how joy and purpose are connected. In summary, people find joy when they have purpose. Purpose has four essential elements to it:

1. It's stable and long lasting- It inspires a person to be dedicated to a goal for the long haul.
2. A goal or aim to accomplish something- It drives a person to make a tangible difference.
3. Meaningful and relevant- It is deeply meaningful to the person.
4. Constructive and contributes in a socially meaningful manner- It has the power to help people look beyond themselves and to the benefit of others, connecting them relationally.

Purpose can lead to joy. And, joy is more reliable than happiness because it is

grounded in these four elements rather than driven by circumstance and emotion. There is nothing wrong with happiness! But joy endures even when our circumstances change. We can pray for each other that we might have joy. In this lesson, Paul's prayer for his Philippian friends references joy and seems to include these four purposeful elements.

MATERIALS CHECKLIST

- Your smart phone. Students' phone too.
- Markers
- 3M Post-It notes
- 5 Large cardboard posters
- Large box to put the 5 large cardboard sheets in
- Wrapping paper/tape [optional]
- Filler for the box. Something fun like paper, packing "popcorn," balloons, or your own creative idea. [this is optional. It makes opening the box more fun]
- Large light or spotlight [optional]

SETTING THE ATMOSPHERE

The Meeting Space: Consider finding a place with a view. This could be in a high-rise office of one of your parishioner business people, an observation deck, someone's house with a view, or in a park on a hill. Plan ahead and get appropriate permission. If you cannot use an alternative site, consider projecting panoramic views off your computer, TV, or screen. If you cannot project panoramic pictures, consider meeting in a different room in the building you use. For consistency, this lesson will assume that you've found a special meeting place "offsite." Adjust accordingly if this is not the case.

The Invitation: You will likely meet during a regularly scheduled youth group time. For this session, plan ahead by communicating with parents/legal guardians that you will be meeting in a different location. Let the parent/legal guardian know where you will be meeting, but ask them to hold off telling their teenagers as you will be communicating with them via text

message.

- Three days before your meeting, text the following message to them:

Do you know WHERE you're going? Watch for details. #joyonpurpose

- Two days before your meeting, text the following message to them:

Do you know WHY you're going? Seek for details. #joyonpurpose

- One day before your meeting, text the following message to them:

Do you know WHEN you're going? [Add info about the day/time/place your group will meet. #joyonpurpose

- The day of your meeting, text the following message to them:

Purpose is the fuel for joy [Add info about the day/time/place your group will meet.] See you tonight! #joyonpurpose

The Venue + Gathering

- Set up your space with no chairs.
- Have background music that is inviting but not too distracting
- Place the giant box in the middle of the room/space. Put a spotlight on it [optional]

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Philippians 1:3-6

Purpose

To help students understand their purpose and how their purpose leads to their joy.

Introduction for Leaders

- Prepare the cardboard posters
 - Write one statement per one cardboard sheet of paper
 - 1. Describe a time when you stuck with something, even when it was hard...
 - 2. Describe something you want to do that you think will make a difference in the world...
 - 3. Describe something you love to do that reenergizes you...
 - 4. Describe something you do that makes you feel connected with others or connected with something bigger than yourself...
 - Place the sheets in the large box and seal it.
 - Prepare the Large box
 - For fun, you may want to wrap the box like a present to create even more anticipation.
 - If you do not wrap the box, at least seal the box.
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Gather

Gather (10 minutes)

Welcome

- Welcome students when they arrive.
- Consider ways to reduce the awkwardness of when students first arrive in the new setting and do not know what to do. For example:

- Have some snacks or a special treat or meal [something simple]
- Use nametags to ensure that every student knows the name of each other
- Have a few simple games to play [cards, hacky sack, etc.]
- Encourage your leaders or student leaders to actively engage in conversation with students who arrive.
- When they ask about the venue or box- Do not say anything about them.

Come Together

- Have students sit in a circle around or near the large box.
- Welcome them and thank them for coming. [Make introductions where necessary]
- Tell them to pull out their phones [or share with a friend]

Pray

Leader [Say]: Let's start our time together by thanking God for the chance we have to be together. I want you to address a text message to my number. [give them your number]. Say you'll explain in a second.

[Pray]. Jesus, thank you for your presence in our lives today, whether we realized you were present or not. You've seen the best and worst of our day so you understand how we're feeling right now- whether happy or sad, content or restless, at peace or upset.

[Invite]. Ask student to text you a word that describes their day today. Tell them you'll read the words but not give out names.

[Read]. For us, today has been ... [read the texts out loud]

[Continue to pray] Thank you for accepting us just where we are at and that we can be together right now. You say that you are with us when we gather in your name. Thank you that we can seek you because you seek us. Amen.

Introduction

Leader [Say]: Tonight, I want us to reflect on what it means to have joy on purpose. To do this, I'm going to need your help. For starters, what do you think we should do with this box?

Leader: Take time to hear what students say about why they should unwrap this box. Build up the anticipation. Have fun with this mysterious moment!

Engage

Engage (30 minutes)

Leader [Say]. I suppose we should unwrap the box then?

- Let the students unwrap the box
- Make this as fun or crazy as you want. [Play music. See above for ideas of what you might fill the box with]

Leader [Say]. Let's pull out the big cardboard poster boards and place them around the room

Next:

- Have students place the poster boards, post-it notes, and markers on the floor/ground with the statements [you wrote these beforehand] facing up.
- Give students time to walk around and read each statement. Don't have them write yet. Just give them a minute to read and ponder each statement.

Next:

- Leader: Ask students complete the sentences for each cardboard poster by having them write their answers on the post-it notes and sticking them on the poster boards.
 - Have them draw a picture or write a symbol representing their answer
 - If they do not want to draw, they can write a word or a short sentence.
- Leader: depending on the size of your group, you can make more poster boards or have students answer more than once [think this through ahead of time to ensure you give clear directions].
- Leader: Encourage every student to answer each question!
 - Remind everyone that there are no wrong answers
 - Encourage honesty. Affirm your students for trying and taking a risk.

After everyone is done posting their answers...

Leader [Say]: Okay, now, want you to break up in groups around each of the poster-boards. Then say:

- *Read* all the answers on your poster board
- *Invite* those in your group specifically explain their picture/phrase/word
- *Group* post-it note answers that are similar to each other

- Try to *summarize* what you all said the best you can.
- Prepare the small groups by telling them to share their answer with the whole group.
- Leader: Have each group report their “answer” to the whole group.
 - Affirm every group by clapping/cheering for them
 - Thank them for doing this hard work of summarizing everyone’s answers.

NOW: Give students a 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper that has the following Scripture passage on it:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. [Philippians 1.3-6]

Leader: Have a student read this passage.

Leader [Say]: Tonight I want to talk about joy. In fact, we’re already talking about joy! Think about the things you just reported. Then ask...

Leader [ask]:

- What do you think joy means or looks like?
- How do you think joy is different than happiness?

Leader [Say]: You all did great. As you probably experienced, describing joy can be difficult. But, I think we all know it when we feel it, right?

Leader [Say]. What’s interesting is that your poster board answers seem to get at what brings us joy.

1. There’s something we experience when we stick with something that’s hard, but important to us.
2. There’s something about connecting our efforts today with a bigger dream we have.
3. There’s something about doing things that reenergizes us.
4. There’s something about knowing that what we do is connected to something bigger than ourselves.

This is joy!

It’s bigger than “happiness” because the feeling is only part of it.

Joy has a sense of purpose to it.

We have #joyonpurpose

Leader [Teach]:

Some would say that #joyonpurpose has these four elements that we can practice:

Intro: We discover joy when we remember that each of us brings something to our world that our world can't live without. Only you can do it! The world needs you!

- Q: Say to yourself, "I am needed." Ask yourself, how does that feel?
1. We discover joy when we begin to see how the things we dedicate ourselves to now, will contribute to our bigger, future goals.
 - Q: Say to yourself, "My small goals prepare me for my big goals." Ask yourself, how does that help you when you feel distracted?
 2. We discover joy when we recognize that God invites us to live our lives to make our world a better place. You can make the world a better place!
 - Q: How do you think you can use your gift/talent to make the world a better place?
 3. We discover joy when we dedicate ourselves to using gifts and talents. We find satisfaction in developing the things we're good at! The world needs your gifts and talents!
 - Q: What is a gift/talent that you feel you have to offer your friends, family, community or world?
 4. We discover joy when we recognize that our life-purposes and goals connect us with others—we may discover new friendship, we may feel a growing commitment to love and serve a particular group of people. Your purpose connects you with others [you're not alone]!
 - Q: How might your gifts/talents connect you with other people?

Leader [Say]:

Okay, in your groups, go around and share an answer to one of these four questions.

Leader: Given each group time to share their answers and talk with each other. Then say:

Leader: Point them to the Scripture passage: Philippians 1.3-6

When we have purpose, we find joy.

This is what Paul prays for, for his friends:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. [Philippians 1.3-6]

Notice what he says:

- Paul has joy and wants his friends to have joy. How? By reminding them of their purpose!
 - God began a good work in them [v 1.6]- that means- they matter and have something the world needs [and so do you!]
 - God will help you take what gift God has given you and help you develop/complete it [v 1.6] - that means- they have gifts and talents to develop for a bigger purpose [and so do you]!
 - Until the day of Jesus [v 1.6]- that means- Until Jesus returns, God is invites us to join God in making the world a better place [that means you, too]!
 - Because of their partnership [v. 1.5]- that means- they're not alone and are connected with friends and the people they love [you are not alone and you are connected through the topics you care about!]

Reflect

Reflect (15 minutes)

Leader: After you offer this short teaching, have students get back into their small groups and answer the following question:

Q: Of all the promises connected with Joy and Purpose, which one is the hardest for you to believe?

1. I matter and the world needs me
2. God has given me gifts and talents to develop
3. God believes that my gift/talent can make the world a better place
4. My gifts and talents can create bridges of friendship with others.

Leader [Pray]:

Here, the leader may offer a prayer for the whole group or s/he may instruct the students to pray for each other in their small groups.

Send Forth

Send Forth (5 minutes)

Leader: Offer some inspiring words to your students in light of these truths we just discussed.

Leader [suggest]: That the group use the hashtag #joyonpurpose when they post something that connects with their purpose/gifts/talents and points them toward joy. Remind them to look for #joyonpurpose in their lives and online- when we do something that brings us joy or see one of our friends having joy on purpose, respond to them with this hashtag- #joyonpurpose

Leader [Group Picture]: Take a group picture. Offer a final blessing and then dismiss them.

Leader: Pray

Jesus, thank you for reminding us that we matter, that we have gifts to share, that our gifts and talents can make the world a better place, and that our purpose in life can connected with others we love and care about. Help us to discover this kind of joy throughout our week. Amen.

After the group dismisses, Send a text of the picture to the whole group with the hashtag #joyonpurpose